

WHO ↓

**REPORT OF THE VISIT BY MEMBERS OF THE
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON HEALTH RESEARCH
TO THE UNIT ON NEUROSCIENCE OF THE
DIVISION OF MENTAL HEALTH AND PREVENTION OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE**

WHO, Geneva, 19 October 1995

On 19 October, as planned, a visit was made by members of the Advisory Committee on Health Research (ACHR) to the Unit on Neuroscience (NRS) of the Division of Mental Health and Prevention of Substance Abuse (MSA).

Those present: Professors J. Lederberg, Niu Shiru, W. Karczewski,
Charas Suwanwela, Drs L. Prilipko and C.L. Bolis.

The WHO Secretariat presented in detail the major components of the programme on neuroscience, which are: research, training and exchange of information. The objectives of the programme are the development and the improvement of new methods for prevention, diagnosis and treatment of mental and neurological disorders.

The Unit pays particular attention to standardization of treatment and research methodologies, implementation of relevant basic approaches of neurosciences to clinical practice in psychiatry and neurology. The main ongoing research components of the programme are the following:

1. Search for biological markers of mental and neurological disorders.
2. Studies of the effect of environmental factors (chemical pollutants, radiation, etc) on brain development and function.
3. Development of new therapeutic approaches related to the problem of resistance to treatment of some mental disorders, as well as to the problem of side-effects of drugs.
4. Implementation and standardization of non-invasive methods in clinical practice (e.g., EEG brain mapping). Stimulation of the utilization of new methods in telemedicine in psychiatry and neurology.

5. Development of the list of essential methodologies to be used in psychiatric and neurological units and methodologies for the cost assessment of treatment effectiveness.
6. Strengthening of research activities on central nervous system injuries, from basic to clinical approaches and preparation of WHO guidelines for CVD and stroke, epilepsy and head trauma.
7. Carrying out an important programme on Neurology and Public Health.

Within the area of training and exchange of information the Unit is carrying out the following specific activities:

- Training seminars for developing countries; fellowship programmes on different areas of basic and applied neurosciences for candidates from developing countries.
- Production of monographs, within the WHO Expert Series on Neuroscience, and training materials.
- Organization of scientific symposia and conferences on the most perspective subjects for practical use in neuroscience.

Budget

At present the programmes are operating through modest extrabudgetary funds. as well as Regular Budget.

Programme execution

The programme has been executed, especially its research component, via the well-developed network of WHO Collaborating Centres on the global level, and via collaboration with NGOs and leading research centres in the world.

Recommendations mentioned during the visit

The group of the members of ACHR agreed on the great importance of the programme of neuroscience for WHO and recommended further support to neuroscience, with particular attention to research on neuroepidemiology, the problems of therapy resistance and side-effects, and control of pain.

It was recommended that the programme on neuroscience be included on the list of priority programmes of WHO.